

# DYNAMIC OF *PONDOK PESANTREN* AS INDEGENOUS ISLAMIC EDUCATION CENTRE IN INDONESIA

**Dihyatun Masqon**

Institut Studi Islam Daarussalam (ISID) Gontor Ponorogo  
Jl. Gontor-Mlapak-Ponorogo 63472 | Email: goodwords.dimas@gmail.com

## Abstrak

Di Indonesia, *pondok pesantren* dikenal sebagai institusi pendidikan agama pribumi. Secara historis, *pondok pesantren* dimulai dengan kedatangan Islam ke Indonesia sebagai pusat yang hanya mengajarkan ilmu agama. Beberapa elemen dasar pada *pondok pesantren* yaitu: Kiai sebagai tokoh sentral, santri sebagai siswa yang menimba ilmu, *pondok* sebagai asrama dimana santri tinggal, dan masjid yang berperan sebagai pusat kegiatan pendidikan. Secara umum, dikarenakan oleh system dan metode pengajaran, *pondok pesantren* dibedakan menjadi dua jenis: tradisional dan modern. Pada dasarnya mereka memiliki visi dan misi yang sama, yaitu mengatakan bahwa pendidikan *pondok pesantren* adalah pendidikan berorientasi komunitas dengan budidaya nilai, sikap moral dan pembangunan karakter dari komunitas muslim. Itulah yang menjadi alasan utama atmosfer hidup di dalam *pondok pesantren* terinspirasi kuat dengan apa yang disebut Panca Jiwa- Lima ruh - yaitu: keikhlasan, kesederhanaan, kemandirian, Ikhwani Islam dan kebebasan yang bertanggung jawab. Di Indonesia modern saat ini, harapan terhadap peran *pondok pesantren* berubah sejak awal abad kedua puluh, tidak hanya melaksanakan tiga peran tradisional (yaitu) sebagai lokus untuk mengubah pendidikan agama, melestarikan tradisi muslim, dan mencetak ilmuwan, namun juga memainkan peran penting untuk mendidik dan mempersiapkan pemimpin masa depan yang memiliki sifat khusus, yaitu: karakter mulia, suara tubuh, pengetahuan yang luas dan jiwa mandiri.

**Kata kunci:** pendidikan agama, elemen dan ruh *pondok pesantren*

## Abstract

In Indonesia *pondok pesantren* is known as the indigenous religious educational institution. Historically it started with the coming of Islam to Indonesia as a center for merely teaching religious knowledge. The basic elements of *pondok pesantren* are: Kiai as a central figure, santri as a student who pursues knowledge, *pondok* as dormitory where santri lives, and mosque which constitutes as the center of educational activities. In general, due to the system and method of teaching, *pondok pesantren* classified into two kinds; traditional and modern. Never the less they are having the same vision and mission, that is to say that education in *pondok pesantren* is community oriented education by cultivating values, moral attitude, and character building of muslim community. That is the main reason that life atmosphere inside *pondok pesantren* is inspired strongly by what so called Panca Jiwa - Five spirits - namely; sincerity, simplicity, self - reliance, Islamic Brotherhood, and accountable freedom. In modern Indonesia today the expectation towards the role of *pondok pesantren* move on since early twentieth century, it is not only performing its three traditional roles as locus for transforming religious education, preserving muslim traditions, and producing scholars, but nowadays it plays an important role to educate and prepare leaders of tomorrow who possess specific qualities, namely; noble character, sound body, broad knowledge, and independent mind.

**Keywords:** religious education, element and spirits of *pondok pesantren*.

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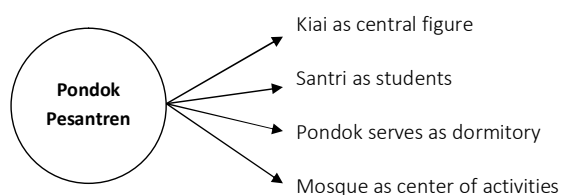
## INTRODUCTION

*Pesantren*, *madrasah* and school are three kinds of the National Educational System in Indonesia. Different from school and *madrasah*, *pesantren* has been identified with Islamic and indigenous originality, infect *pondok pesantren* is the oldest educational institution known in Indonesia.

In the early development, many *pondok pesantren* only focused their program on religious learning (*tafaqquh fiddin*) and reading a variety of Islamic classical books such as in the field of *fiqh* (Islamic law), theology and *tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism). The main reason for attending *pondok pesantren* was to gain the blessings of Allah. Therefore, a certificate of learning graduation was not given adequate attention, and there was not a precise regulation regarding the study program.

In *pondok pesantren*, *santri*, student of *pesantren*, would learn to become Muslims who obey God's commands, have good characters, show strong and comprehensive personal features, possess intellectual capability and are independent. Upon returning to their community, *santris* have been projected to be good examples for them to spread Islamic message as *rahmatan li al'alam*. There are a number of principles adopted by *pondok pesantren* such as sincerity, modesty, peace, wisdom, accountable freedom, autonomy, togetherness, harmonious relationships (among *santris*, teachers, parents, and community).

### Element of Pondok Pesantren



First, *Kiai*. The *kiai* is always a central figure in *pondok pesantren*. The *Kiai* is not only a spiritual leader, but also a holistic leader in all aspects of life in *pondok pesantren*. In traditional *pesantren* the *kiai* teaches classical Islamic textbooks with a *sorogan* method, i.e. a teaching - learning process in which the *kiai* personally addresses individual students (known as *santri*) or a small group of *santri* at elementary level. Another popular method employed by the *kiai* is *wetonan* or *bandongan*, that is what in modern terms is called 'lecture'. The *kiai* gives specific, scheduled lectures on certain topics of some classical textbooks (*kitab kuning*) in front of a large number of intermediate audiences.<sup>1</sup> As for more advanced *santri* or *takhsassus*, usually the *kiai* employs a teaching-learning method called *musyawarah* in delivering his lecture, which is similar to a conference.

Second, *Santri*. The *santri* is someone or a group of people who pursue knowledge in *pondok pesantren* and is usually accounted as an indicator of its progress and popularity. *Santri* usually have a strong solidarity and familiar bond among themselves or between them and the *kiai*.

Third, *Pondok*. *Pondok* is a dormitory where *santri* live and study under the guidance of the *kiai*. In a number of *pondok pesantren* it is *santri* themselves who take care of their *pondok* and all their other needs under the supervision of senior *santri*.

Fourth, Mosque. Mosque constitutes a main resource and space in which the *kiai* carries out his obligation to educate and train his *santri*, to perform *ibadah* (divine certitude), learning Islamic textbooks and conducting social activities. Functionally, the mosque is not only for praying, but it is usually can be used for empowering muslims in a broad sense.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Martin van Bruinessen, 1990. "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 146, p. 226-269.

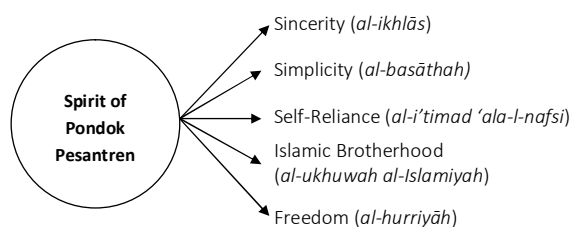
<sup>2</sup>Imam Zarkasyi, 2009. *Diktat Pekan Perkenalan*, Gontor: Darussalam Press, 2009, p. 3-5

According to Education Management Information System (EMIS), Directorate General of Islamic Institution. The total number of *Pondok Pesantren* in Indonesia 14.361, 1.381 located in Sumatra, 11.664 in Java, 336 in Bali & Nusatenggara, 294 in Kalimantan, 661 in Celebes, and 25 in Papua.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth mentioned that traditional *pondok pesantren* give more attention to the Islamic classical textbooks, known as *kitab kuning* (yellow books), the reservoir of the intellectual richness inherited from previous Muslim scholars from the early and medieval periods of Islamic history. These textbooks in fact contain analytical thoughts of earlier *ulama* responding to religious, political, economic as well as social and cultural problems of their time and places. Mean while modern *pondok pesantren* have departed to study more recent books, and treat the classical ones as complementary subjects.

In any case, *pondok pesantren* have contributed a lot in developing the quality of Islamic education and of religious and national life where the government can fight ignorance and solve the universal human problems.

### The Spirit of Pondok Pesantren



As it was mentioned before that the silent features of *pesantren* as a religious educational institution is the presence of a learned Muslim scholar, usually called *Kiai*, who plays the role of central figure in the system, the availability of dormitories, named *Pondok*, the presence of students, called *santri*, and the existence of a mosque as the center of activities and religious

<sup>3</sup>Departemen Agama, 2004. *Dinamika Kehidupan Pesantren di Indonesia*, Jakarta: Direktur Jenderal Pendidikan Islam., p. 17

education. It is within those pillars along with its spirit that *pesantren* education was very effective in developing morality and mentality, as well as intellectuality of the students.

This spirit, according to Imam Zarkasyi, can be simplified into five spirits, *Panca Jiwa*, namely: Sincerity (*al-ikhlas*), Simplicity (*al-basathah*), Self-Reliance (*al-i'timad 'ala-l-nafsi*), Islamic Brotherhood (*al-ukhuwah al-Islamiyah*), Freedom (*al-hurriyah*).<sup>4</sup>

**Sincerity** is a principle for work, it is the spirit of all activities, the Holy Qur'an suggests that one should follow those who do not ask for salary and they are among the guided people.

**Simplicity** is a way of behaving that is applicable to an individual conduct in his or her daily life, it is very positive conduct towards every situation of life. This implies that one should live based on his or her basic needs and not on demand, because this spirit will cultivate strength, courage, determination, and self control.

**Self-Reliance** is an important spirit applicable for both individual and institutional principle. This means the students of *pesantren* do not depend on others, each student manages his extramural activities independently, while students as a whole are given total responsibility to manage all their students' activities in the boarding system.

The *pesantren* it self as an education institution is managed to be self-reliance which means it does not depend on the help of others. People may give financial or material support but *pesantren* develops not because of supports of others, *pesantren* has to rely on its own resources without having to be dependent on others for aids or assistance.

**Islamic Brotherhood** is a principle through which every student learns how to build strong friendship and empathetic solidarity towards others, and how to respect each other. Fighting, quarrel, or other types

<sup>4</sup>Imam Zarkasyi. 1995. *Pelajaran Fiqh 1*, Gontor: Trimurti Press, p. 5-9

of dispute among students are regarded as a crime.

As far as **freedom** is concerned, it is a mental attitude in which one should be free of group fanaticism. This spirit makes *santri* optimistic in facing the problem of life, freedom in shaping his future and selecting his way of life.

There were, infect, more than those five spirits taught to the students in the *pesantren* system, both traditional and modern one. These were reiterated in various occasions inside as well as outside the class, pasted on the walls of the campus, and written in books, brochure and guide-book of the *pesantren*. The Arab maxim *man jadda wajada* (whosoever works hard will get), for example, is the famous spirit of work that none of the *santri* will ever forget. Other maxims like: *Hidup sekali, hiduplah yang berarti* (you live once hence live meaningfully), and: *wa ma-l-lazatu illa ba'da-l-ta'abi* (no gain without pain), *man yazra' yahshud* (whosoever sows he will reap) are learned by heart. It means that *pesantren's* system of education is values-oriented which are mainly derived from the teachings of Islam.

### The Ideal Model of Pesantren

The expectations towards the role of *pondok pesantren* amongst the Muslim community in Indonesia move on since the early twentieth century. *Pondok Pesantren* in this due regard, has in many different ways responded to the demands of the modern Islamic education and social economic changes of Indonesian society, it is not only to perform its three traditional roles as a locus for transforming Islamic learning, preserving Muslim traditions and reproducing scholars. Further more, as we shall discuss in the case of *Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor* (Darussalam Modern Islamic Institution Gontor, commonly known as Gontor), it becomes center to educate leaders of tomorrow with specific qualities, namely: noble character, sound body, broad knowledge, and independent mind.

It is worth noted that *pondok pesantren* can maintain its development and progress not only because it has flexibility to make adjustments and readjustments to the ever-changing situations and needs, but also due to the fact that *pondok pesantren* has a strong bond and proximate relationships with its surrounding community. This closeness may be traced back through the historic account that education in *pondok pesantren* is community oriented education and therefore it serves as community based learning center.

*Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor* located at Gontor, Ponorogo, East Java, 200 km from Surabaya, the capital of East Java Province. Historically Gontor founded on September. 20.1926 by three brothers; K.H. Ahmad Sahal (1901-1977), K.H. Zainuddin Fanani (1908-1967) and K.H. Imam Zarkasyi (1910-1985). They were known as *Trimurti*. The main characteristic of Gontor is its distinct approach towards modernizing Islamic education by using integrated system of *pondok pesantren* and *madrasah* into a new system of Islamic education. The *madrasah* was a good system for formal education but not for non-formal and informal education. Students may learn well in the class but what happen outside the class was beyond the system. The *madrasah* is precisely like the modern school system and is not sufficient to inculcate other Islamic teachings that are not covered by the *madrasah* curriculum. The positive aspect of *pondok pesantren* was to be found in its boarding system where non-formal and informal education and activities can be carried out within the spirit and bound of Islam. Imam Zarkasyi, one of the founding fathers and a real architect of Gontor system of Islamic education, tried his best to integrate both of them in one system by adopting the positive aspects of both the *madrasah* and the *pesantren* system assimilating them within a specific identity.<sup>5</sup> The nature

<sup>5</sup>Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, *Imam Zarkasyi's Reform of Traditional Pesantren in Indonesia*, 2009. Article presented at 7<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Islamic Education,



of this new system is discernable from his statement below:

“ This *pondok pesantren*, Gontor, is an Islamic educational institution like any other institution. The difference is only in its teaching method. We use modern teaching method but do not teach something new in religion. This *pondok* is a *waqf* for the Muslim ummah and is not the property of *Kiai* anymore. This *pondok* is not inclined to any political party; therefore its motto is *Berdiri diatas dan untuk semua golongan* (stand above and for all groups). Its educational goal is to produce a Muslim who has noble character, sound body, broad knowledge, and independent mind. The final objective of this *pondok* is *li l’la’i kalimatilla*”.<sup>6</sup>

In the mean time, to actualize this integrated system Gontor has adopted the best prototype of educational institution in the world. There were four ideal institutions in this regard, namely: *al-Azhar* University in Egypt, *Shinquit* in Mauritania, *Aligarh* Muslim University and *Shantiniketan* both were in India.

*Al-Azhar* University is known as the center of Islamic knowledge in the Muslim world and was highly reputed with its survival for centuries due to its *waqf* property. *Al-Azhar* University could give scholarship to Muslim students from all over the world.

*Shinquit* was a well known institution, not only for its boarding system but also for the sincerity of its founders and teachers, and their hospitality as well. Located in a remote area in Mauritania and under the guidance of its founding father Sidi Abdullah, it could accommodate around 3000 to 5000 students with full scholarship. Allegedly, the graduate of this institution played a pivotal role in the spread of Islam in North West Africa in 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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International Islamic University Collage of Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, p. 9

<sup>6</sup>Imam Zarkasyi, 1976. *Pidato pada Resepsi Kasyukuran Setengah Abad Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor dan Peresmian Masjid Jami’ Gontor*. (Gontor: unpublished text of Speech, p. 7

*Shantiniketan* was basically a traditional boarding school that belongs to Rabindranath Tagore, a *Hindu* philosopher and nobel prize winner. Located in a village and under the authoritative figure of Tagore, this institution inculcated the philosophy of life, the most important of which is the principle of simplicity of life with peaceful atmosphere, *shantiniketan* etymologically means abode of peace. In this institution teachers and students learn together in a milieu that is fully designed for education.

The fourth and the last model is *Aligarh* Muslim University (AMU) which was and is still an Islamic university in the history of India. It was founded in 1920 under the name *Mohammedans Anglo Oriental Collage* by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan but later it became first university in India, its main objectives was to revive the Muslim ummah by the inclusion of knowledge through education. It was because of its objective that Gontor made it a model for the future of Islamic education.<sup>7</sup>

So the ideal educational institution envisioned by Gontor was an Islamic educational institution that was to be the center of learning for Islamic studies, which could generate its own fund and able to give scholarship to its students. This institution should be driven by the spirits of sincerity, simplicity, brotherhood, self reliance and accountable freedom, and other Islamic spirits which are instrumental for one’s religious and worldly life. By this spirits and principles the institution could hopefully be a world class educational institution.

### The Characteristic of Gontor Institution

We shall discuss this point only on certain important matters pertaining two important aspects, namely: new Islamic educational system and new institutional system founded by *Trimurti* to reform *pondok pesantren*.

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<sup>7</sup>Panitia Penulisan. 1996. *Biografi KH. Imam Zarkasyi, Dari Gontor Merintis Pesantren Modern*, Gontor: Gontor Press, p. 476-480

*New Islamic educational system*

- a). In Gontor's eyes there is no dichotomy of knowledge in Islam, *santri* learns religious subjects, *fiqh*, *aqida*, *nahw sarf*, *balagha*, *hadith*, *tafsir* with modern teaching method, and studies social-natural sciences, method of teaching, mathematics, biology, algebra, physics and cosmography with religious approaches. When former President Soeharto visited Gontor in 1971, he asked Imam Zarkasyi about the ratio of social-natural sciences and religious sciences in the curriculum. Imam Zarkasyi replied: "Here the curriculum consists of 100% religious and 100% social-natural sciences." By this new curriculum model Gontor intended to produce Muslim intellectual who are conversant of not only religious knowledge but also social-natural sciences. The ideal out put for this system, as reiterated by Imam Zarkasyi in many occasions was: "to produce Ulama with high intellectual capacity and not intellectual who knows little about religion (*Ulama yang intelek dan bukan intelek yang tahu agama*).<sup>8</sup> The implication of Imam Zarkasyi's obsession is quite clear that in the future there should be Muslim scientist who speaks about their expertise from Islamic perspective.
- b). Beside this new curriculum system, Gontor also applied new instructional methods, especially in teaching Arabic and English.<sup>9</sup> The main idea of this principle was that the method of teaching is more important than the subject taught (*al-tariqah ahammu min al-maddah*), however the teacher is more important than the method (*al-mudarris ahammu min al-tariqah*). To simplify this maxim Imam Zarkasyi used to draw the parable of the knife and the apple. The skill

of cutting the apple is more important than the knife, yet knowledge about the skill is not important for someone who is already skillful. So, the personal factor of a teacher is the most important one, and that is the spirit of the teacher (*rūh al-mudarris*). To improve the spirit of teachers, Gontor employed the religious approach by enforcing the spirit of *pesantren* that the teacher should have, for example the spirit of sincerity (*ikhlas*) when he teaches his students.

- c). Apart from the enforcement of Islamic spirit by utterance or verbal and written words, Gontor designed student activities with the objectives of inculcating mental skill. Imam Zarkasyi asserted that mental skill is more important than job skill. On this point he disagreed with the national education system that emphasizes on job skills. True Islamic education should be directed for worshipping Allah (*ibadah*), for seeking knowledge (*talab al-'ilmi*) not for becoming government servant. Imam Zarkasyi used to say that it is better to become an entrepreneur who manages his own business and employs many officers rather than to become government servant. This is what he meant by self-reliance (*al-i'timād 'alā an-nafsi*) as one of the spirits of the *pondok pesantren*. The learning strategy for inculcating mental skill, according to him, is "learning by doing" which can be carried out by involving all students through informal and non-formal education. In this system students are given the responsibilities to manage their own activities under the umbrella of Student Organizations. The guiding principle in this regard is that everyone should be "ready to lead and ready to be led" (*siap memimpin dan siap dipimpin*) sincerely based on the spirits of *pesantren*. As a result, from early morning of *Subuh* prayer, four o'clock in the morning, until ten a clock at night, all students are preoccupied with activities. Imam Zarkasyi is of the opinion that young men should be kept busy and should not be

<sup>8</sup>Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Imam Zarkasyi's Reform...", p. 11

<sup>9</sup>Dihyatun Masqon. 2001. *al-Ittijahat al-Haditsah fi Ta'limi al-Lughah al-'Arabiyah Li ghairi-l-Nathiqien biha fi Indonesia*, Thesis presented as partial fulfillment for Ph.D Degree in the faculty of Humanities and Language, Jamia Millia Islamia, (New Delhi, unpublished, p. 320-348

free from any meaningful activities. "Take break or rest is no other than shifting from one activity to another" (*al-rahatu hiya al-intiqal min 'amalin ila 'amalin akhar*). That is the best way for inculcating the mental skill to the students, such as the spirit of team works, leadership and sense of responsibility, entrepreneurship and management, beside, of course, cultivating discipline habit.

### New Institutional System

Another innovative and reformative step taken by Gontor is concerning the status of the institution, its organization and its future. As a matter of fact, the traditional *pesantrens* mostly plagued with stagnancy and ineffective educational management. *Kiai*, the central figure, and his family were so dominant that when he died, he would be substituted by his son or son-in-law, otherwise the *pesantren* would cease to operate. This indicates that the weak point of *pesantren* system was its regeneration process and the structure of its organization.

*Trimurti* the founding fathers of *Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor* have initiated a new *pesantren* system, which applied effective and efficient management, and adopt modern ideas of progress as well as modern system of education. At the outset, they endowed almost all the land inherited from their parent for the sake of *pesantren*. They started with a small step in educating the illiterate villagers that was in 1926 but they have in their minds big aspirations, great idealism of building a world class education institution. The real institutional system began three decades after the establishment of *pesantren* that was in 1958, when they declared that they endowed sincerely in writing all their inheritance to the Muslim ummah. From that moment the *pesantren* was no longer the property of the founders or their descendents. The waqf declaration also mentioned that survival of the *pesantren* should be the responsibility of

the fifteen appointed members of Waqf Board. Another point of the declaration asserted that the *pesantren* should be developed further to qualify as an Islamic University and become major center for Arabic Islamic Studies that offers its service to the ummah.<sup>10</sup>

At present, after the death of the last *Trimurti*, K.H. Imam Zarkasyi in 1985, Gontor has survived well and has been properly maintained under the dynamic leadership of Dr. K.H. Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, M.A., K.H. Hasan Abdullah Sahal, and K.H. Syamsul Hadi Abdan. Its property has been successfully developed.

Gontor today has fifteen branches to fulfill the demand of society using the same curriculum, the same method and inculcate the same values as well with total students more than 20.000, these are:

1. Gontor 2, at *Madusari*, *Ponorogo*, East Java.
2. Gontor 3, at *Gurah*, *Kediri*, East Java.
3. Gontor 1 for girls, at *Mantingan*, *Ngawi*, East Java.
4. Gontor 2 for girls, at *Mantingan*, *Ngawi*, East Java.
5. Gontor 3 for girls, at *Widodaren*, *Ngawi*, East Java.
6. Gontor 4 for girls, at *Konda*, *Konawe Selatan*, South East Celebes.
7. Gontor 5 for girls, at *Kandangan*, *Kediri*, East Java.
8. Gontor 5, at *Kaligung*, *Banyuwangi*, East Java.
9. Gontor 6, at *Sawangan*, *Magelang*, Middle Java.
10. Gontor 7, at *Podahoa*, *Konawe Selatan*, South East Celebes.
11. Gontor 8, at *Labuhan Ratu*, Eastern Lampung.
12. Gontor 9, at *Kalianda*, Southern Lampung.
13. Gontor 10, at *Seulimeun*, Nangroe Aceh Darussalam.
14. Gontor 11, at *Sulit Air*, *Padang*.
15. Gontor 12, at *Tanjung Jabung Timur*, *Jambi*.

<sup>10</sup>*Piagam Penyerahan Wakaf Pondok Modern Gontor*, Ponorogo, 1958, p. 15-17

Presently, Gontor has no less than 29 business enterprises in various sectors such as book store, pharmacy, mini market, rice field, publishing house, radio station, packing mineral water and the likes. Not less than 828,05 Ha of land possessed by Gontor, and its system had been developed and modeled by its graduate in about 215 *pesantren*.<sup>11</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Until today, *Pondok Pesantren* still and always implement its commitments to be the center for community development by cultivating positive moral attitude and character building of the muslim community mainly based on values derived from Islamic teaching, for a man to be successful in life character is more essential than erudition. This character becomes so significant keeping in mind that cultivating good ethics has to include developing desired attitude, comprehending values system as well as personal appreciation which must be manifested in people's behavior. At this very point, in modern Indonesia *Pondok Pesantren* work hand in hand with the government to prepare qualified human resources who are pious, virtuous, intelligent, and meaningful for the sake of better tomorrow.[]

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<sup>11</sup>Tim Redaksi Wardun Wardun, *Warta Dunia Pondok Modern Darussalam*, vol.63, Sya'ban 1431 (Tahun Ajaran 2009-2010), p. 25-65.

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